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Politics of Harit Pradesh

The Case of Western UP as a Separate State

The demand for Harit Pradesh, to be carved out of 17 districts of western UP, has received a boost following the creation of three new states in 2000. This paper looks at certain issues relating to the demand for Harit Pradesh and argues that the demand in turn, intertwined in the politics of region and caste in UP, is also spearheaded by a section of the jats of western UP. Though the agitation has now moved into its second phase, mobilisation is as yet confined to leaders of a few key communities and social groups, and in recent years, has also been beset with intra-jat conflict.

JAGPAL SINGH

The elite in a democratic polity manipulate both the extant as well as constructed issues and symbols for mobilising support. The demand for a separate state or autonomy of the state is one of the examples of such mobilisation. Creation of three new states, i e, Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh in November 2000 has given a boost to such demands in various other parts of the country. The demand for a separate state of western UP, i e, Harit Pradesh is one of the latest cases in this context. While such demands in other parts of the country or within UP are made by the relatively backward areas, in the case of western UP politicians use even the economic prosperity of the region as cause of their discrimination. The case of western UP, however, is much closer to Punjab so far as the prosperity is concerned, but the dissimilarities between the two are more glaring than the commonalities.

This paper attempts to analyse certain issues relating to the demand for creation of a separate state of Harit Pradesh, consisting of certain districts in the western part of UP. It argues that demand for Harit Pradesh is intertwined in the politics of region and caste in UP. It is spearheaded by the politicians, especially a section of jats, belonging to western UP. Ajit Singh has been playing the pivotal role in it. With the rise of other peasant castes in UP such as yadavs, in the post-Charan Singh era, the jats are placed in a politically disadvantageous position. Given their small numerical strength in the population of entire UP and restriction of their habitat mainly to the districts of western UP, especially in the face of challenges mainly from the yadavs, the existing size of UP constrains the ascendancy of jats in politics of the state. Yadavs, on the other hand, are not only numerically larger, they also inhabit a larger area of the state. Creation of a separate state of western UP might enable jats to dominate the politics of Harit Pradesh not only at the level of a region but also a state, where they have substantial population and occupy a dominant place in the agrarian economy; it would provide an opportunity to some of them to become the chief minister of the new state. It seems difficult in the present size and shape of Uttar Pradesh.

I
Harit Pradesh

The state of "Uttar Pradesh is essentially an artefact" or "largely a collection of geographic and historical regions" made up of the areas which were brought under the colonial administration by conquest and annexation mainly from the nawabs of Awadh, the Marathas and the king of Garhwal over a period of more than quarter of a century, i e, from 1775 to 1856. These areas were divided into two distinct administrative units – The north-west province (later renamed as the province of Agra) and Awadh. In 1902 these were brought under the single administration of the provinces of Agra and Awadh, later rechristened as the United Provinces. The autonomous princely states of Rampur and Tehri Garhwal became constituents of the province in 1949. The name of the province was again changed to Uttar Pradesh ('Northern Province') in January 1950 [Brass 1983:229-231, 1985:230; UPZAC Report, Vol I, 1948:79-80; Kumar 2000a: 50]. In 1950, there were 51 districts in UP. Their number has been increasing since then and with creation of 15 more districts during the two regimes of Mayawati, i e, between September 1995 and September 1997, their number became 82. Following the formation of Uttaranchal on November 9, 2000, the state of Uttar Pradesh is left with 70 districts.

With the exclusion of Uttaranchal, the districts of UP can be categorised into six regions: (i) Rohilkhand, (ii) Upper Doab, (iii) Lower Doab, (iv) Oudh, (v) Eastern districts and (vi) Bundelkhand [Brass 1985:71-73). On the basis of their geographical location in the state, the districts can be identified as those belonging to western, central, eastern and southern UP or Bundelkhand region. Such categorisation is relevant for the discussion in this paper as it is used in almost all kinds of discourse relating to various regions of UP. There is, however, no such official categorisation.

In the recent past the demand for creation of a separate state of western UP consisting of 23 districts, i e, Agra, Mainpuri, Firozabad, Aligarh, Bareilly, Badaun, Bulandshahr, Etah, Mathura, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Pilibhit, Rampur, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Hardwar, Shahjahanpur, Mahamaya Nagar, Baghpat, Gautambudha Nagar, Jyotiba Phule Nagar has been raised.[1] These districts mainly belong to the Rohilkhand, the Upper and Lower Doab regions. Over the years different names have been given to the proposed state, e g, Doab Pradesh, Ganna Pradesh, Kisan Pradesh, Jatistan, Brij Pradesh, Pashchimanchal and Harit Pradesh.[2] Harit Pradesh, literally meanining Green Province and signifying the agricultural prosperity of the region, is the latest nomenclature given to it in June 2000. On the eve of 1996 UP assembly election the Kisan Vikas Party (KVP)

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was founded by Om Singh Tamar for creation of a separate state. The KVP contested in several constituencies of western UP with formation of a separate state of western UP as the main issue on its agenda. But the party performed badly in the election. It also ceased to exist after the election. Nevertheless, in the following period the demand has been continuously raised by certain political parties, individuals, lawyers and organisations. Prominent among these include Ajit Singh with his party under different names, i e, the Bharatiya Kisan Kamgar Party (BKKP), the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), the Pashchimi Uttar Pradesh Rajya Nirman Morcha (PUPRNM; Western Uttar Pradesh State Formation Front) and Harit Pradesh Nirman Samiti (HPNS). The UPPRNM was set up in 1997 following a seminar held in the Mavalankar Hall, New Delhi, at the initiative of Ajit Singh. It aimed at mobilising public opinion in favour of a separate state of western UP (interview with Gyanendra Sharma, president, youth wing of the PUPRNM, July 9, 1999). With the renaming of the proposed state as Harit Pradesh, HPNS was formed on June 27, 2000 at a meeting of leaders from western UP held in New Delhi (*The Hindustan Times*, June 28, 2000).

After losing the 1996 Lok Sabha election to the BJP, Ajit Singh has been raising the demand for creation of a separate state of western UP.[3] On September 23,1998, eight MLAs belonging to the BKKP led by Kokab Hamid walked out of the UP Vidhan Sabha when their demand for creation of a separate state of western UP was not met. Their demand was made in response to the presentation of Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Bill, 1998 by the Kalyan Singh government for a separate state of Uttaranchal. The bill was passed after making some amendments to the original bill.[4] Again on October 24, 2000, Kokab Hamid, now from the platform of the Rashtriya Lok Dal – the changed nomenclature of the BKKP – introduced a resolution on the floor of the UP legislative assembly for the division of the UP into four states including the Harit Pradesh. The resolution was, of course, defeated.[5] During the past five years the modus operandi of mobilising the public opinion by Ajit Singh or any other leader of the BKKP/RLD has included public meetings, 'padyatras', press conferences, press statements, 'jan andolan' (mass movement), announcement to start agitation, holding of seminars and brain storming sessions.[6] But none of these has been effective enough to mobilise the masses. Some times even the promise to start agitation for this purpose could not be implemented; it remained confined to the press statements. For example, Ajit Singh had promised that he would make the issue of separate state a plank in the Lok Sabha election of 1998. But nothing of this sort happened. However, he seems to have been working more systematically since 2000 keeping in view the UP legislative election to be held in 2002. In his public meetings or statements he has again stated that creation of a separate state of western UP would be main plank of his party in this election.

The veracity of Ajit Singh's statements, attempts to forge alliances with other parties and mobilise people through the 'padyatras', etc, is subject to the outcome of the election to be held in 2002. Notwithstanding the failure or the success of the demand to get a separate of western UP carved out, an analysis of other related issues is required. Who are raising this demand? What is the relationship between the region, caste and politics in this case? What is the extent of its support? What impact is it going to have on the electoral politics in the state? This paper attempts to seek answer to these questions.

History of the Demand

Though the demand for a separate state of western UP started being raised more regularly in the late 1990s, it was raised even on earlier occasions but never pursued. Highlighting the cultural links between the Hindu Jats of Haryana and Bharatpur in 1931, Chaudhary Lalchand, president of the Delhi session of Jat Mahasabha demanded a separate state for Hindu Jats comprising Meerut, Agra and Delhi divisions. In 1935, Chhotu Ram demanded a province populated by Hindu Jats alone, including south-east Punjab (present Haryana), western UP and Rajasthan with the purpose of protecting the cultural and economic interests of the Hindu Jats [Datta 1999:134]. In 1954 as well 97 MLAs hailing from western UP gave a signed memorandum to the central commission for the reorganistion of the states demanding a separate state of western UP consisting districts of western UP and some parts of Haryana. The demand was vouched in terms of cultural and linguistic affinities, historical precedent and administrative convenience [Brass 1974:18]. The Janata Party MLA, Sohan Veer Singh Tomar (convenor of the PUPRNM) raised it in the UP assembly in the 1970s. Even Charan Singh had preferred smaller states to bigger ones like UP and Bihar. He argued that these states were difficult to manage from the administrative point of view. He said " remarkable progress made by smaller states may provide clue to how states can be reorganised" (*The Hindustan Times*, October 30, 1979).

Why a Separate State?

The convenor of the PUPRNM Sohan Veer Singh Tomar has explained the reasons for creation of a separate state of western UP in a booklet '*Uttar Pradesh Ka Punargathan Kyon?*' (Why Reoganisation of UP?). In a message through the booklet, Ajit Singh points that the main reason for the chronic mal-administration and lack of development in UP is the "expansion of single administrative jurisdiction" in the whole of the state; democracy usually succeeds in 'small units'; bigger the units, lesser contact with the masses; UP is the biggest state in the country and no unit in any democratic system in the world is so big from the demographic point of view; it is not possible for a 'centre' like Lucknow to provide efficient administration for the whole of the state; it is humanly not possible for the chief minister to tour all districts of the state even once; the headquarters of the judiciary, public service commission, etc, are away by about 300-600 kms, from many regions in the state; – it means that the constitutional and administrative institutions of the state are beyond the reach of people in the large part of the state [Tomar nd].[7] In support of his arguments Ajit Singh often refers to B R Ambedkar.[8] The views of Ajit Singh, which he reiterates in all his public statements, speeches, rallies, etc, are shared by a large section of people in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts.[9] They provide following arguments in support of their demand for a separate state:

(1) The state capital Lucknow has neglected the area covering western UP: (a) development of western UP is insignificant in comparison to its contribution to the state; 'Paschimi Uttar Pradesh Ki Kamai Ko Poorvi Uttar Pradesh Walein Khatein Hein'(western UP toils and eastern UP eats) is the common refrain in the region; other parts of UP are developing at the cost of western UP. Ajit Singh said that west UP contributes 70 per cent income of the entire state, not even 20 per cent of the expenditure is made there (*Amar Ujala*, July 19,1998); (b) western UP has contributed more to the defence and security of

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the country; Jat Regiment has been at the forefront of the country's defence.

(2) The dstant location of the state capital Lucknow and machinery of justice at Allahabad: Lucknow, the capital of state, dominates the politics of UP and Allahabad is abode of the high court as well as the headquarter of the main administrative departments. Both these cities are too far from western UP; visiting these cities is cumbersome, economically and otherwise for the people of the western UP. Whenever people of western UP visit Allahabad High Court or Lucknow, they are cheated and discriminated against, people of these places also look down upon those from western UP. Experts in various selection committees to the government jobs belong to the eastern UP, who discriminate against the candidates of western UP.

(3) Economic and educational discrimination: Most of the factories are located in eastern UP. The academic institutions of western UP are given much less grant-in-aid in comparison to those of eastern and central UP.

(4) Too unwieldy to govern: Due to large population and number of districts, different agro-climatic and cultural zones, UP with its present size is unwieldy to be governed. The states like Haryana and Punjab have made progress due to their smaller size.

(5) Political discrimination: The politicians of eastern UP attempt to keep the people of western UP out of important political positions.To substantiate this point the president of the youth wing of the PUPRNM, Gyanendra Sharma, said that from 1997 to 1992 the UP government had banned elections to the student unions of western UP, while it was allowed in the eastern UP. He also said that most of the chief ministers of UP hailed from eastern UP and they took decisions in favour of eastern UP (interview, July 9, 1999). Echoing simlar views Ajit Singh alleged "though they (Mayawati, Kalyan Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav) all hail from western UP, once they reach Lucknow they forget about this place (western UP) because eastern and central UP are where votes are concentrated" (*The Times of India*, March 1998).

(6) Cultural differences: There are cultural differences between western and eastern UP. The central and eastern parts of UP share common culture with western Bihar rather than with western UP. Besides, the western UP has legacy of its distinct historical significance. The places of birth of Lord Krishna Mathura, the capital of Pandavs, Hastinapur and the site of where the revolt of 1857 first broke Meerut are located in western UP.

Some of these arguments/perceptions seem to be real and others constructed. For example, the one relating to the distance between the state capital Lucknow and the centre of legal machinary Allahabad are based on the genuine grievances of the residents of western UP. Notwithstanding the real or the constructed nature of these arguments, they are relevant so far as their significance in mobilising the support for a separate state is concerned.

The Demands

In the light of above arguments and preceptions the following demands have been raised from time to time :

(i) a branch of the mini sectariat be set up in western UP; (ii) an agricultural university should be set up in western UP and Meerut college being the biggest college in the state should be declared a universty; (iii) a bench of Allahabad High Court be set up in western UP, and finally; and (iv) a separate state of western UP be carved out of present UP.

It must be noted that before the demand for the separate state was taken up more vigrously, the political elite of western UP used to raise mainly rest of the demands. Their failure to get those conceded convinced them that the only solution to the problems of western UP would be provided only if the people of this region were left to themselves or they were given a separate state of Harit Pradesh. It is noteworthy that demand for separate state was preceded by the lawyers' agitation for establishment of a separate bench of Allahabad High Court in western UP. The failure of the lawyers to get a bench of the high court provided an opportunity to some politicians to raise the issue of the separate state more forcefully. The following section discusses the lawyers' agitation for creation of a bench of Allahabad High Court in western UP.

II
The Lawyers' Agitation[10]

For almost two decades the lawyers of western UP have been agitating for the establishment of a bench of Allahabad High Court in Meerut.[11] The lawyers set up the Pashchimi Uttar Pradesh Bench Sangharsh Samiti (UPPBSS). This demand was raised as far back as in the 1950s. But it has been since the 1970s that almost every year the lawyers have been agitating on this issue. They take recourse to demonstrations, hold rallies at Meerut or Delhi, launch 'Jail Bharo Andolan' (court arrest movement), had presented memoranda and charter of demands to the prime minister of the country, chief minister of UP, district magistrate of Meerut, speaker of the Lok Sabha. The longest agitation of the lawyers took place in 1981. Since then the lawyers observe strike on every Saturday.

Arguments In Favour of High Court Bench[12]

Apart from the argument which is given in favour for the demand of a separate state, e g, the distance between various districts of western UP and Allahabad is too long, the following arguments are also made specially regarding the separate bench of the Allahabad High Court in western UP:

(1) The seats of the (new) high court at Allahabad and its bench at Lucknow, which were created according to the High Court (Amalgamation) Order, 1948 are not permanent.[13] The location of these seats can be changed in accordance with the provisions of the order; the high court or division benches would be set up at Allahabad or at such other places in the United Provinces as the chief justice may with the approval of the governor of UP, appoint.[14] This implies that situation (the distance between various districts of western UP and Allahabad and Lucknow, etc), demands that there should be a separate bench of the Allahabad High Court in western UP. It will be in consonance with the provisions of the order of 1948. Hence the demand for the bench of the high court in western UP is legal. This argument is given to refute the resolution of the Allahabad Bar Association, which termed the demand for separate bench of the court in western UP as unconstitutional [Premi 1985].

(2) From the point of view of the population, the case of UP is fit for setting up of the bench in western UP. The state with the population of 15 crore has only one bench of the Allahabad High Court, at Lucknow. But states which are much smaller, even those with one-third of UP's population have at least two benches of the high court. For example, west UP, whose population is around 4.5 crore does not have any bench of the Allahabad High Court, while the states with lesser population like Rajasthan have it. Even smaller states have benches of the high courts. For example, Guwahati High Court has it

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benches in Imphal, Kohima and Shillong. (3) Western UP is discriminated against even if the area of state in relation to setting up of the court is taken into consideration. The districts of agitation cover 33.61 per cent area of entire UP. These districts have an area of 98,933 sq kms, whereas entire UP has an area of 2,94,413 sq kms. But the Allahabad region which is an area of 1,07,400 sq kms and Lucknow (central region), which has an area of more than 62 thousand kms have a high court and bench respectively.
(4) The number of pending cases in the high court increases more than the resolved cases and a large number of such cases belong to western UP. It is financially and otherwise cumbersome for the people of western UP to pursue their cases. The clients of western UP will continue to face problems till a bench of Allahabad High Court is set-up there. Within two months, November 1, 1996 to December 31, 1997, the number of pending cases at the Allahabad High Court increased by 19,658, while within the same period only 421 cases were resolved. Till December 31, 1997, there were 5,23,853 pending cases in Allahabad High Court. Of these 49 per cent belonged to west UP. The pendency of such cases can be reduced, if there was a separate bench high court in western UP.
(5) The lawyers complain that the government and politicians are not bothered about their problems. They give priority to the issues which help them in power game. For example, 21 new districts have been created in UP, of which eight are in western UP. But the logic given for creation of the new districts should also apply for creation of the bench of the high court .

Initially, the agitation started in Meerut in 1978. In the following period it was extended to other parts of west UP as well with the purpose to dispel the impression that it was a demand of the lawyers of Meerut region only (Inteview with Som Datt Tyagi, Sectretary Bar Association, September 10, 1978). Although the lawyers of 16 districts of western UP – Meerut, Ghaziabad, Bulandshahar, Mathura, Saharanpur, Moradabad, Agra, Rampur including some districts of UP hills like Dehradun, Pauri, Nainital have supported the agitation, those from Meerut division have played the most active role in it. In 1983 the agitation resulted in scuffle between police and the lawyers; on their way to present a memorandum to president of India, the lawyers violated the prohibitory orders leading to police lathi-charge. Around 71 lawyers were arrested (*The Indian Express*, December 8, 1983; *Meerut Samachar*, December 10, 1983; *The Times of India*, December 8, 1983).

The agitation lacked popular support, though conscious section of the society sympathised with it. Besides, after the submission of Jaswant Singh Commission report (discussed in the next para), the lawyers of Agra and Barielly region became indifferent to it, and after the passage of resolution for Uttarakhand the lawyers from Dehradun, Nainital and Pauri lost interest in the agitation. It evoked opposition from the lawyers of Allahabad region.

Jaswant Singh Commission Report

In response to the lawyers' agitation the central government appointed a commission under the chairmanship of Justice Jaswant Singh known as the Jaswant Singh Commission on September 24, 1981 to look into the issue of setting up a separate bench of Allahabad High Court in western UP.[15] The terms of reference of the commission were not confined to UP only; it was to consider such cases in other parts of the country also, where the demand for the establishment of separate benches of the high courts was raised. The commission was supposed to submit the report within six months of its commencement. But several six monthly extensions delayed the submission of the report till April 30, 1985.

The commission recommended setting up of the bench in western UP, but in Agra; not Meerut. It also recommended setting up of circuit bench in Dehradun and Nainital. Suggestion to set up the bench at Agra and not Meerut invited the wrath of the lawyers of Meerut region. They were, in fact, opposed to the appointment of the commission but had accepted it reluctantly. They considered the appointment of the commission as an imposition on them. They pointed out that they had never demanded it. They looked at recommendation of the commission as a ploy to divide the lawyers of western UP .

With the submission of the Jaswant Singh Commission's report, the focus of the lawyers' agitation shifted to the implementation of the report. The report became a bone of contention between the central and state governments. The former referred the report to the state government for its opinion. The BJP (Atal Behari Vajpayee) criticised the central government for delaying the implementation of the report by referring it to the state government. The central government (the then law minister, H R Bharadwaj), on the other hand accused the BJP and Janata Party of instigating the lawyers of Allahabad against setting up of the bench in western UP. The state government referred the matter back to the central government. The politicians of Allahabad too reacted to the issue keeping in view their political expediency. While Amitabh Bachchan, who was an MP representing Allahabad opposed the creation of the bench in western UP, Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna had remained indifferent to the issue.[16] Mayawati decided to set up the bench at Meerut during her chief ministership but withdrew it within two-three days due to the opposition from Allahabad region. Similarly Kalyan Singh, the chief minister of UP belonging to the BJP, avoided the issue by referring the issue to the chief justice of Allahabad High Court to solicit his opinion, which was against the setting up of the bench in western UP (*The Hindustan Times*, May 31, 1998).

The demand for the bench got linked to the issue of a separate state. Against the background of the lawyers' agitation and its disappointing results, lack of popular support to it, ambivalent attitude of most politicians, perceptions of lawyers' in Meerut about the Jaswant Singh Commission's recommendations to set up bench at Agra and not at Meerut, the lawyers and politicians of Meerut region have since realised that only solution to the problems of people of Meerut region is to have a separate state of their own. Now the issue no longer remains the setting up of a separate bench of the high court; rather it would be a high court of a new state. It would also unite people of various districts of western UP like Meerut and Agra.[17] However, the agitation for the bench of the high court has caught the momentum again. The lawyers held rallies and meetings in Fabruary and March 2000. Besides, their boycott of work on Saturday has been continuing since 1981 (*The Hindustan Times*, March 12, 2000).

III Mobilisation of Various Groups

Ajit Singh has attempted to mobilise various groups, e g, political parties, students, lawyers, trading community and chambers of commerce in support of the Harit Pradesh.[18] Attitudes of the major political parties and leaders have been dictated by political considerations. While

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a section of the BJP leadership is not averse to the idea of division of UP even after creation of Uttaranchal and the Congress has not taken a categorical stand on it, the SP is opposed to it.[19] As mentioned earlier, the SP along with the BJP opposed the RLD's resolution in the UP assembly suggesting the division of UP into four more states. Contrary to the arguments of the RLD, it said that smaller states are not economically viable.

The BSP, the Rashtriya Kranti Party, the Janata Dal, the Lok Dal supported the resolution of the RLD. At a meeting organised by Ajit Singh in Lucknow even the former prime minister H D Deve Gowda along with the representatives of the BSP expressed support for creation of a separate state like Harit Pradesh (*The Hindu*, October 19, 2000).[20]

As mentioned earlier, Ajit Singh declared that he would make Harit Pradesh an election plank in the assembly election of 2002. He said that it was essential to get at least 50 out of 100 MLAs elected on a single platform in order to be effective as a balancing force in the formation of the government[21]; this would also help in the passage of a resolution in the assembly for the formation of Harit Pradesh; in his assessment no party would get necessary majority for the formation of the government in the state; he appealed to the electorate to vote for those parties which would support this issue; his party would ally with any party which would support the issue; he hoped that once the momentum for the formation of the state picked up other parties like the BSP, the NCP and SP would also support the issue (*The Hindustan Times*, October 11, 2000)[22]. Keeping it in view Ajit Singh has also entered into an alliance with Prakash Ambedkar and is hobnobbing with the NCP with the purpose of being able to bargain on the issue with whoever becomes the chief minister of UP.

It is worth noting that Ajit Singh is also the most strident in his attitude towards the SP; he accuses Mulayam Singh Yadav of backtracking from the issue; he pointed out that Mulayam Singh Yadav was one of the signatories to a document along with Charan Singh which had demanded a separate state for western UP, but now he is not supporting the issue. Ajit Singh accused the opponents of the small states as those disregarding the views of B R Ambedkar.[23]

Significance of the issue can be gauged from certain decisions of the BJP-led government in UP vis-a-vis the issues relating to the demand for Harit Pradesh. Now that the Lok Dal has already announced its intention to make the separate state as a plank in the election of 2002, the BJP does not seem to let the issue slip out of its hands. Even as the BJP leadership at the state level seems to be opposed to creation of Harit Pradesh, those in the region are inclined towards it. The decision of the state government to have Meerut as the centre for the conduct of the PCS (provincial services examination) apart from other two already existing centres – Lucknow and Allahabad and sanctioning of a proposal to set up an agriculture university in Meerut by converting the western campus of the Gobind Ballabh Pant University situated at Modipuram into a separate university seem to be attempts towards meeting the demands raised by the proponents of Harit Pradesh (*The Hindustan Times*, August 19, 2000).

IV
Caste and the Demand for Harit Pradesh

Even as the demand for a bench of the Allahabad High Court is made by the lawyers belonging to different castes, the one for a separate state in western UP has been initiated and raised largely by jats. It is related to the urge of jats to dominate the politics of not only of a region but also a state. With the demise of Charan Singh, who was a source of their inspiration, and symbol of caste solidarity, the jats of this region lost a leader of national stature who enjoyed the mass following throughout UP. The post-Charan Singh era has also witnessed the rise of a generation of ambitious politicians among jats like various other communities. The caste composition of present-day UP is an impediment in realistion of their political ambition. They understand that the formation of separate state might help them to get proper political accommodation. But in the politics of UP with its existing size which consists of other regions as well, their influence has declined considerably. In terms of its regional existence, their dominance has got restricted to a region in the state of UP, e g, western UP. And so long as western UP remains part of the present UP, jats might not be in a position to dominate the politics of the state. On the contrary, other castes like yadavs are placed in more advantageous position. The reasons for the jats' political decline lie in their numerical strength in relation to other peasant castes. According to the 1931 Census, jats formed only 1.6 per cent of the population of UP, while yadavs constituted 8.7 per cent of it [Hasan 1989: Table 2]. A survey conducted in 1991 showed the OBCs as forming 37 per cent of voters in UP, of which yadavs were the largest [Hasan 1998:138]. Even the rapid census which was conducted by the panchayati raj deparment of the Samajwadi-BSP government in 1994 to assess the population of the OBCs in UP with the purpose of providing reservation for them in the urban and rural local bodie's elections returned the jats along with bhumihars and tyagis only as 2 per cent of its population, while OBCs which included yadavs as well constitute 37 per cent of it [Hasan 1998:166 and Table 4.10].[24] In the assembly elections held between 1952 and 1980, the per centage of the jat MLAs along with those of bhumihars and tyagis varied between 4.49 (in 1969) and 6.95 (in 1974), of ahirs (yadavs) MLAs along with those kurmies, lodhs and gujars between 6 (in 1952) and 23.26 (in 1974) [Hasan 1998:Table 4.2].

Politics of Charan Singh

It is pertinent to ask here how Charan Singh was able to dominate the politics of UP despite being a Jat without substantial population of his caste in major part of the state. An analysis of the policies and strategy of Charan Singh regarding the backward classes and peasantry and his emergence on the scenario of UP politics at a particular epoch of time can provide an explanation to the causes of influence of Charan Singh.

Charan Singh remained an undisputed leader of the peasantry and backward classes in the entire UP during the 1950s and 1960s as a congress leader and later as a non-congress leader till his death in 1987. Though the backward class peasantry of eastern and central UP usually supported the socialist parties, yet they had supported Charan Singh in his individual capacity even when he was in the Congress Party. As the disintegration of the socialist movement in UP almost coincided with Charan Singh's exit from the Congress, the backward classes were left with the only option of supporting Charan Singh's party BKD/BLD, whom they had already been admiring. Charan Singh was accepted as a leader by the non-jat peasants in the eastern and central UP, apart from the jats of western UP. While he was a member of the Congress, he carved a separate base for him among the backward class peasantry

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in central and eastern UP, e g, yadavs, kurmies, koeris, etc. During the 1950s and 1960s he visited eastern and central UP frequently and addressed meetings of the backward class peasantry. He appreciated the benefits of the land reforms accrued to them, of which he was the main architect, introduced by the Congress for them. Even when he was the chief minister of UP, he consolidated his position as a leader of the backward classes and peasantry. His attempts to carve out a base among the backward classes exposed him to the allegation of the high caste Congress leadership in UP, of favouring the backward classes at the cost of the high. Charan Singh on the other hand, accused them of favouring the high castes [Singh 1992: 128-29, 158-59; Hasan 1989:175-77; 1998:131; Brass 1983:307-09]. His differences within the Congress led to his defection from it at an appropriate time and to the formation of the BKD by him in 1969. Contrary to the Congress's policies, he gave representation to the middle castes and backward classes, e g, ahirs, yadavs, kurmies, etc, in the allotment of tickets, in the governments headed by him, and as heads of his party at the district and state levels [Hasan 1998:131-32; 1989:191; Johnson 1975:242-65 and Shrivastava 1976:333-34]. He also continued to ally with the backward class leadership in UP and Bihar like Mulayam Singh Yadav, Ram Naresh Yadav or Karpoori Thakur. Charan Singh remained the undisputed leader of the backward class peasantry in north India till his demise in 1987.

Charan Singh dominated the politics of backward classes and peasantry of UP in a particular phase of peasant politics at a time when there was no leader in the state from any other peasant community who could match his stature. In the absence of challenge to his leadership from any peasant leader from the backward classes coupled with his policies and strategies, Charan Singh was able to project himself as the leader of the backward class peasantry like yadavs, kurmis, keoris, lodhs, etc.

Meanwhile, during the three decades after independence, there also emerged a new generation of leadership among the non-jat peasant castes like yadavs, benefiting from the state policies, especially the land reforms, mainly abolition of landlordism and Green Revolution. The vacuum created by Charan Singh's death was filled up by the leaders belonging to the non-jat peasant castes, mainly yadavs. Leadership of Tikait suffered from caste dissensions and 'hyper-localism' [Singh 1992:97-103]. The epochal factors now favour yadavs more than the jats. As mentioned earlier, they are better-placed from the point of view of caste population, and its regional spread.

V
Conclusion

The agitation for Harit Pradesh is still in its infancy. It, however, has passed through two phases so far. The phase one got support almost exclusively from a section of jats. The second phase has seen the involvement of other communities and social groups like the students, lawyers, chamber of commerce and traders as well. But the mobilisation is still confined to the leadership of various groups and communities; masses are not involved. However, the people cutting across socio-economic backgrounds would like to have a separate state of western UP; they feel that it would not only enable them to be nearer to the legal and administrative centres of the state, unlike Allahabad or Lucknow, it would also provide job opportunities to all sections of the society. Apprehensions of the non-jats are allayed by the realisation that in the electoral politics no single community can prevail on its own; it has to take support of others as well.

The agitation also seems to be suffering from the intra-jat conflict. Some of the jat leaders who were initially involved in the agitation are no longer active. Besides, the chief of the BKU, Mahendra Singh Tikait has not joined the agitation. Instead, he has launched an agitation in September and October, 2000 for exclusion of Hardwar and Udham Singh Nagar from Uttaranchal.

Except issuing statements, holding press conferences and rallies, etc, the advocates of the Harit Pradesh have not exploited the potential of the masses for support to the agitation. At present it is an issue raised by the leadership, who want their political accommodation. The agitation for Harit Pradesh has the potential of developing into the assertion of a nationality, if the realisation of the people for a separate state of western UP is exploited. But it seems that the leadership of the agitation does not accord priority to the mobilisation of peoples' support beyond their participation in the election. Its main focus is on getting adequate number of MLAs from various parties elected, who could support a resolution for division of UP or creation of Harit Pradesh in the legislative assembly of ths state.

The issue of Harit Pradesh has the potential implications for the UP assembly elections to be held in 2002. In a bid to get adequate number of MLAs, which would enable him to get a resolution for creation of the Harit Pradesh passed in the legislative assembly, the president of the RLD, Ajit Singh has kept his options for an alliance open. Except with the opposition of the Mulayam Singh Yadav-led SP and indifference of the Congress, the major parties in UP like BJP, BSP and the RKP in principle are not opposed to creation of Harit Pradesh. The significance of Harit Pradesh in the election will depend on how forcefully the RLD or any other political force will make it a plank. It might lead to polarisation of the supporters and opponents of Harit Pradesh. There is a possibility of the BJP trying to outbid the RLD in demanding the Harit Pradesh like it did by declaring the jats as OBCs in March 2000. EPW

Notes

[I am thankful to C P Bhambhri, A R Khan and R K Barik for their suggestions and comments on the drafts of this paper].

1 Hardwar has already been included in the new state of Uttaranchal which was formed on November 9, 2000. The BKU led by Mahendra Singh Tikait has launched an agitation against its inclusion in the new state. But the main political forces which are demanding Harit Pradesh are not participating in this agitation, even as the BKU has not yet joined the one for Harit Pradesh. The name of another district, Mahamaya Nagar, has been changed to Hathras in the official records.

2 Though one is not sure as to when new nomenclature will be repalced by another, yet for brevity of discussion I will use Harit Pradesh and separate state of western Uttar Pradesh interchangeably through out this paper.

3 Advocates of Harit Pradesh suggest that apart from the newly created state of Uttaranchal, the existing state of Uttar Pradesh should be divided into four more states, i e, (i) Harit Pradesh; (ii) Poorvanchal consisting of 27 districts: Mau, Allahabad, Kaushambi, Ajamgarh, Ballia, Behraich, Balrampur, Gonda, Shravasti, Siddarth Ngagar, Basti, Maharajgang, Deoria, Khushinagar, Ghazipur, Jaunpur, Sultanpur, Kabir Nagar, Pratapgarh, Sonbhadra, Sant Ravidas Nagar, Mirzapur, Varanasi, Chandauli, Faizabad, Ambedkar Nagar and Gorakhpur; (iii) Bundelkhand consisting of seven districts: Jhansi, Banda, Jalaun, Shahujinagar, Lalitpur, Hamirpur, and Mohaba. It should include the following districts of Madhya Pradesh as well: Sagar, Damoh, Datia, Bhind, Murena, Narsinghgarh, Panna, Chatarpur, etc; and (iv) Madhya Pradesh/Awadh Pradesh/Madhyanchal consisting of 14 districts: Lucknow, Barabanki, Hardoi, Unnao, Sitapur, Rai Berielly, Kheri, Kanpur Nagar, Akbarpur, Fatehpur, Farrukhabad, Etawa, Orraia and Kannauj [Tomar, nd].

4 In fact, on September 18, 1998, the opening day of the assembly session, some ministers belonging to the BJP also demanded that a separate state consisting of 12 districts of

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eastern UP should be created. They shouted "No Uttaranchal without Poorvanchal". The demand, however, was dropped at the instance of the chief minister, Kalyan Singh (*The Times of India*, September 19, 2000).

5 The resolution mentioned the following as other states to be created out of UP: Poorvanchal, Awadh Pradesh (Madhyanchal) and Bundelkhand. It was supported by RLD, left parties, Bahujan Samaj Party, the Rashtriya Kranti Party (RKP), Janata Dal and Lok Dal. The Samajwadi Party opposed the resolution; its representative Ambika Chaudhary argued against the resolution on two grounds: one, the the move for smaller states was initiated by the RSS and two, the smaller states would never be viable economically (*The Hindu*, October 25, 2000).

6 For examples, see *The Times of India*, March 7,1998, *The Hindustan Times*, October 17, 1998 and November 10,1998. The invitees to the brainstorming sessions or seminars/ conferences included those leaders from other regions who support the formation of or agitate for the small or separate states. The first brainstorming session held in Mavalankar hall, New Delhi, in 1997 was attended among others by the JMM leader Shibhu Soren (Interview: July 9, 1999, Gyanendra Sharma; see also *The Hindu*, August 20, 2000). The second brainstorming session was held on July 16, 2000 in Muzaffarnagar; Prakash Ambedkar, leader of the Bahujan Republican Paksh – Bahujan Mahasangh (BRP-BMS), was one of the participants in this meeting (*The Hindu*, July 17, 2000; *The Times of India*, July 17, 2000).

The UPRNM also organised sit-ins at the district headquarters in the first week of August, 1998. The agitation had turned violent; students courted arrest around 70-80 of them were sent to jail. (Interview July 9, 1999; Gyanendra Sharma, president youth wing of the PUPRNM). These activities of the advocates of Harit Pradesh are reminiscent of how the leaders of Haryana participated in various conferences and meetings, and submitted memoranda to urge upon the government to create a Haryana Prant before and after its creation [Kumar 1991:123-24].

7 *The Hindustan Times*, March 12, 2000 also mentions the distance between various district headquarters and Allahabad.

8 Ambedkar favoured smaller states. Recommending the break up of the north Indian states of UP, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, he suggested the division of Uttar Pradesh into three states, e g, western Uttar Pradesh, central Uttar Pradesh and eastern Uttar Pradesh and Meerut, Cawnpore and Allahabad as their capitals respectively. The western UP in the scheme of Ambedkar consisted the areas of the newly constituted Uttaranchal as well [Ambedkar 1989:150-51].

9 It is based on the discussions which I held with groups of people in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar; Personal interview Gyanendra Sharma, July 9,1999 and newspapaer reports.

10 The discussion on the lawyers' agitation is based on the interviews held in the month of September, 1998 with Chandra Shekher Sharma, advocate Meerut district court; Som Datt Tyagi, secretary Meerut Bar Association, 1978; and on the relevant reports from the newspapers (1983–1999): *The Hindustan Times*, *Amar Ujala*, *Dainik Jagran*, *Indian Express*, *Punjab Kesari*, *The Times of India*, *Hindustan*, *Janata Express*, *Meerut Samachar* and *Dainik Prabhat*.

11 Before their inclusion in the new state of Uttaranchal the lawyers belonging to some districts of the UP hills like Dehradun, Pauri, Nainital which then had formed the part of the undivided UP also participated in the agitation for a bench of the high court in western UP. In fact, establishment of high court at Nainital has provoked those from Dehradun to agitate for having it there rather than at Nainital. Follwing the pattern of the lawyers of western UP, the lawyers of Dehradun have decided to observe strike on every saturday of the month (*The Hindu*, November 1, 2000).

12 Based on the memorandum/charter of demands of the high court bench Sthapana Sangharsh Samiti, interviews and newspapers.

13 The (new) high court at Allahabad came into existance as a result of the amalgamation of the old high court at Allahabad, and Oudh chief commissioner's court at Lucknow.

14 The high court bench Sthapana Sangharsh Samiti Paschimi Uttar Pradesh, Memorandum/ Charter of demands.

15 The following discussion is based on the charter of demands of the high court bench Sthapana Sangharsh Samiti, Paschimi Uttar Pradesh; Meerut Bar Association.

16 In reaction to Amitabh Bachchan's stance on the issue, the lawyers of Meerut had appealed to the cinema owners of the district no to screen his films.

17 Ajit Singh links the demand for separate state with unwillingness of the other politicians to set a separate bench of the Allahabad High Court (*Amar Ujala*, July 18,1988). It is noteworthy that other politicians were sore over the suggestion to set up bench at Agra, but Ajit Singh did not join this issue. Perhaps, he wants to project himself as the leader of entire western UP, including Agra and Meerut divisions.

18 For mobilisation of lawyers, students, trading community and chambers of commerce (*Dainik Jagran*, June 24, 2000; *The Hindustan Times*, November13, 2000).

19 There are differences wthin the BJP on the issue of creation of smaller states. The president of the party Bangaru Laxman supports the idea of small states; L K Advani said that the NDA government would also support it, if the state legislature of the concerned state passes a resolution to this effect. The chief minister of UP belonging to the BJP, Ram Prakash Gupta, opposed the division of UP, after creation of Uttaranchal. However, the president of the Uttar Pradesh BJP unit Kalraj Mishra agreed with the need for creation of Harit Pradesh, but pointed out that time for it was not favourable as state of Uttaranchal has recently been created. Another BJP leader from western UP, Bireshwar Tyagi, rejected the idea as politically motivated, while some other BJP leaders from the region supported the demand for a separate state of western UP (*The Times of India*, October 1,1998; *Dainik Jagran*, June 24, 2000; *The Hindustan Times*, December 24, 2000). As mentioned earlier, on September 18, 1998, some members belonging to the BJP had walked out of the UP assembly demanding the creation of separate state of 'Poorvanchal'.

20 The BSP activists in a group discussion with me on November 18, 2000 in Meerut expressed the need for a separate state of western UP, and would like to support an agitation for it, if asked by their party. But they also pointed out that at present the demand is being raised by jats, because the latter are facing political crisis. Instead of jats taking lead in such an agitation, they would like a dalit party do so.

21 Addressing a rally of his supporters at Shamli on Novemer 9, 1998, Ajit Singh raised the demand for creation of Harit Pradesh and said: "the moment we have enough MPs and MLAs with us, a separate state would become a reality" (*The Hindustan Times*, November 10,1998).

22 BSP's support for the small states is confirmed from the stance which its MLAs took in the Rajasthan assembly recently. BSP MLAs, led by Mahir Azad, along with the independent MLAs demanded creation of a separate state for the districts of eastern part of Rajasthan – Bharatpur, Alwar, Dholpur, Sawai Madhupur, Dausa and Karauli. They alleged that the politicians and planners belonging to the western and southern parts of Rajasthan have discriminated against the eastern districts and made investments in their regions (*The Hindu*, November 3, 2000).

23 See fn 8.

24 In March 2000, even jats of UP have been included in the category of the OBCs.

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